



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# BRITISH EMPIRE IN INDIA.

BY GOLDWIN SMITH, D.C.L.

---

WHAT is likely to be the effect of this reawakening of the East on the stability of British Empire in India?

It is commonly supposed that the Indian Empire is the fruit and the monument of the territorial ambition of Great Britain. This is a mistake. The British Government and Parliament were strongly opposed to territorial aggrandizement in India. Parliament placed its opposition on record, declaring that the extension of dominion in India was contrary to the honor and interest of the nation. It might almost be said that Sinde alone, of all the Indian provinces, was conquered in aggressive war; and this was an adventure of hot-headed Napier, much questioned at the time. Dalhousie's annexations, the policy of which was also questioned, were not conquests but lapses to the suzerain, or, as in the important case of Oudh, forfeiture for default in feudal duty.

The Empire of the great Akbar gradually crumbled to pieces in the hands of his degenerate successors, and filled Hindostan with a murderous anarchy of usurpations. The ambition of Dupleix aimed at carving out of the ruin an Eastern Empire for France; and he might have succeeded, had not Clive come off his commercial stool in the office of a British company to display his native genius for war. Of the British factory, the aims and policy remained purely commercial. Into war, and dominion as the result of war, it was forced by the attack of Surajah Dowlah on Calcutta. Clive's miraculous victory over the Nabob at Plassey brought Bengal, with its treasures and revenues, into the hands of the poorly paid officers of a commercial company. A scandalous reign of corruption and peculation ensued. The Company's servants made, by infamous means, fortunes vast for that

day, and carried them to England, where they avenged the plundered Hindoo by corrupting society and Parliament. Clive restored comparative purity by increasing salaries and retrenching perquisites.

In that destructive and murderous anarchy, amidst plundering Mahrattas and usurpers, such as the Sultans of Mysore, whose policy was rapine and perfidy, the ascendancy of a power comparatively of peace and order, though very far from perfect justice and purity, could not fail to grow. But it was impossible for the British Government to acquiesce in the creation of such an excrescence on the body politic as a separate Empire in the hands of a commercial company with a privy power of making peace and war. The ministry of Fox and North sought to put an end to this, as well as to the scandalous gains and pestilent influence of Nabobs, by transferring the government of India to a body appointed by Parliament. The bill was badly advocated, and an opening was given for appeals to the dread of political jobbery and of interference with the sanctity of charters. George III seized the opportunity, by a gross abuse of his personal influence turned out the Whig ministry, and called Pitt to power. Pitt could not take up Fox's measure, but he (1784) carried one akin, which, leaving India ostensibly in the hands of the East India Company with its directory in Leadenhall Street, placed the action of the Company under an Imperial Board of Control, while the Crown had the appointment of the Governor-General, by whom thenceforth the general policy was determined; the Company retaining a power of recall, which at a later day it notably exercised by recalling Lord Ellenborough, the author of the bombastic proclamation about the recovery of the gates of Somnath. Its commercial privileges, the monopoly of the Chinese and Indian trades, the Company as yet retained; but of these it was afterwards divested by the growing spirit of commercial enterprise and free trade. It retained the appointments to the Indian service, "writerships," as, in memory of the commercial era, they continued to be termed, and the army of Indian mercenaries termed "Sepoys," which, taking a leaf from the book of its enemy Dupleix, it had established on a large scale.

Political organization had been commenced, and the foundation of a regular Empire had been laid by Warren Hastings, a great and good ruler, and deservedly blessed, even if his rule was

arbitrary, by people whom he rescued from anarchical oppression. Gross injustice was done him by Burke, fired with wild philanthropy and egged on by Francis, the author of the "Junius" libels, who had been Hastings's enemy in Council at Calcutta. The story of the judicial murder of Nuncomar by Impey, instigated by Hastings, is a lie, for importing which into the impeachment of Hastings Burke was censured by the House of Commons. Of any personal maltreatment of the Begums, Hastings was entirely innocent. Cheyt Singh was a feudatory, and liable to requisition as such. Only in the Rohilla case is Hastings clearly open to censure. The Rohillas, however, were not a pastoral and poetic community of Hindoos, but a tribe of marauding Afghans domineering over a Hindoo population. The motives of Hastings were perfectly pure, and his own hands were absolutely clean. When, after his acquittal, he appeared before the House of Commons, the whole House, except the managers of the impeachment, stood up to do him honor.\*

So long as the Company held real sway, the policy was strictly and narrowly commercial. Dividends were the paramount aim and end of government. Immigration was discouraged; colonization was forbidden. Education of natives was labelled as dangerous. Missionaries were excluded. There was to be no interference of any kind with native superstitions, however gross, or native customs, however criminal, not even with Suttee or infanticide. A guard was furnished for the festival of Jugger-naut, and Hindoo gods were recognized in swearing to a treaty. Acquisition of territory was banned, and alliances with native powers were discouraged. "Send us dividends" was the one great commandment of the Company to its servants in India. Nothing could be further from the thoughts of Leadenhall than the idea of civilizing and Anglicizing Hindostan.

A new era, however, was opened by the institution of the Board of Control, and the practical transfer of the supreme power in India from the mercantile Company of Leadenhall to a political Governor-General appointed by the British Crown. Henceforth

\* Macaulay's Essay on Warren Hastings is, perhaps, the most brilliant of the brilliant series. But it is extremely unjust alike to Hastings and to Impey. Macaulay had apparently not read the trial of Nuncomar, for he makes Impey sit alone as judge, whereas he had three assessors. Impey seems to have been a good legislator, and when arraigned by his enemies, was acquitted by the House of Commons.

the political and civilizing object prevailed, the more completely when, by the abolition of the Company's trading monopolies, its commercial interest had been annulled. Now began the effort to improve and civilize India on the British model, the results of which are at present before the court of philanthropic opinion. Whatever the judgment of that court may be, that the intention has been good cannot be denied. Never before had conquest been so beneficent in its aims. Of late years, India has been regarded by England rather as a ward and pupil than as a thrall.

First, however, it was necessary that the Empire should be organized, that it should reach its bounds, and that the *Pax Britannica* should be established in Hindostan. This process was performed by the Marquess of Wellesley, a little man of imperial character and grand aims. It involved wars with the great plundering power of the Mahrattas and its murderous progeny the Pindarees, as well as with the brigand Sultanate of Mysore. In these wars, marvellous feats were performed by handfuls of British soldiers under commanders whose names are little known to fame, but whose achievements showed that the British army, which, when led by Royal Dukes, might be truly described as an army of lions led by asses, was not led by asses in Hindostan. Wonderful above all were marches in wars with Mahratta horsemen, under a broiling sun, without the provision now made for the soldier's comfort and relief. The Sepoy force formed by the Company did well with British troops at its side. The Sepoy was faithful to his leader and paymaster. Country or patriotism he had none. Diplomacy seconded war. Wellesley did his work amidst the tremors and almost the shrieks of Leadenhall. Leadenhall at last recalled him; but the work was done. The outcome was an Indian Empire, with the Governor-General as its Viceroy, rather more than two-thirds of it held in direct dominion, the residue as fiefs, large or small, by vassal Rajahs, on condition of allegiance to the British Crown and decent behavior as rulers. The second condition has been approximately enforced. Saved by the sovereign power from revolutions to which, like other Eastern rulers, they would otherwise have been exposed, the Rajahs have been prudently faithful to British rule. As the natural supplement of Empire, Wellesley also laid, in the teeth of opposition, the foundation of an institution for training Anglo-

Indian statesmen. The result was Haileybury, with its motto, "*Redit a Nobis Aurora Diemque Reducit.*"

Now came a line of political Governors-General, British statesmen in character, who, breaking entirely with the traditions of Leadenhall and disregarding its cries of alarm, pressed forward the work of introducing British civilization into Hindostan. They gave India a scientific code of law, and, so far as Eastern character would permit, trustworthy courts of justice. Disregarding timorous warnings, they suppressed evil customs, such as Suttee, infanticide and human sacrifice. They put down Thuggee and Dacoity. To abolish caste was beyond their power. Nor did they venture to touch the Zenana or that great evil, child marriage. They licensed a press as free as empire could safely permit. They created colleges and schools, through which European science has found its way to Hindostan. In later times, they have even tried to introduce a large measure of civic equality. They have admitted the native to the bench of justice, to municipal administration, in form at least even to political power. To introduce the native to the full reality of political power would, on the part of the conqueror, be abdication. In dealing with the land question, they were at first led astray by their English model, and bestowed on Bengal a counterpart of British landownership and squirearchy, which, as the circumstances were widely different, did much mischief.

Neither was material improvement allowed to sleep. The saying that, if the British departed from India, they would leave no monument of their stay but empty beer-bottles, is belied by railroads, telegraphs, canals, and works of irrigation, as well as by colleges and hospitals.

In 1845-50 came, on the eve of a great peril, the last important extension of the Empire. In the Punjaub, Ranjit Singh, a very able adventurer, had organized the dominion of the Sikhs, a religious and military sect, with a large army trained by European officers and provided with a very powerful artillery. When the strong hand of Ranjit was withdrawn by death, the army became turbulent and restless. At last it crossed the Sutlej, and hurled itself on the British dominions. There followed a series of desperate battles, with extreme danger to the Empire, the forces of which once at least suffered a reverse. Victory at last declared for the British, and the Punjaub, under the wise and

beneficent administration of Sir Henry Lawrence, was completely incorporated in the Empire.

All was apparently going smoothly, on the whole, when, in 1857, the veil of happy illusion was suddenly rent by the tremendous convulsion of the Mutiny. It is now admitted that the suspected violation of caste by the use of grease in the cartridges was the immediate cause of the outbreak. There had been several mutinies from the same fear of aggression on caste. Lord Dalhousie's annexations of fiefs, notably of that of Oudh, the vassal Prince of which had forfeited by gross misgovernment, may have had some effect. The feeling of the natives generally, though suppressed, was probably with the mutineers. But the Rajahs were true to the power which held them on their thrones. Sikhs, though their country had been so recently incorporated, fought well as mercenaries on the British side, and have been found trustworthy ever since.

A glaring light was thrown on the relation between the races. Terrible atrocities were committed on both sides, not least on that of the dominant race, which, transported with fury, treated the Mutiny not as a rebellion or a mutiny of the ordinary kind, but as a rising of slaves. There was merciless slaughter of the people, and one British General asked for permission to impale. The good Lord Elgin, who was in India at the time, was horror-stricken at the language held even by a clergyman. Not less shocking were the cries for blood in England, especially those of literary eunuchs displaying their virility.

The Sepoy army of the Company having thus collapsed, the end of Leadenhall had come, and India was transferred to the Crown; not without misgivings on the part of some who feared alike the direct influence of British politics on India, and the direct influence of India on British politics. For alarm on the first ground there is proved to have been little reason. Danger from the political exercise of patronage has been averted by resort to competitive examination, and the "Competition Wallah" seems not to have been found wanting in practical ability. When it was proposed to confer upon the Queen the coveted title of "Empress," there was an express stipulation that the title should not be assumed within the constitutional dominions. The condition could hardly be strictly observed, and the title has carried a sentiment with it. If you have an Empire, you must

have an Emperor; and if you have an Emperor, Imperial sentiment will follow.

India, with her 294,000,000 people, is now held for Great Britain by an army of 70,000 British troops and 150,000 Sepoys. The command is entirely in British hands, the highest rank to which a native can attain being that of a non-commissioned officer, with certain personal distinctions. The artillery, since the Mutiny, has been kept entirely in British hands. So is the supply of ammunition, which the natives have no means of making. Railroads have practically multiplied the force. Native princes have among them armies numbering upwards of 130,000, but mostly of the rabble kind.

Fusion of the races there has been none, or only such as is mournfully denoted by a small number of feeble Eurasians. Nor does it appear that, in spite of the laudable efforts of British Viceroy and other reformers in high place, the social barrier has been to any great extent removed, at all events as regards the mass of the people. To a Hindoo of high rank, society in England throws its door wide open, but this seems hardly to be the case as yet in Hindostan. In his "Letters and Journals," Lord Elgin says:

"It is a terrible business, this living among inferior races. I have seldom from man or woman, since I came to the East, heard a sentence which was reconcilable with the hypothesis that Christianity had ever come into the world. Detestation, contempt, ferocity, vengeance, whether Chinamen or Indians be the object. There are some three or four hundred servants in this house. When one first passes by their *salaaming*, one feels a little awkward. But the feeling soon wears off, and one moves among them with perfect indifference, treating them, not as dogs, because in that case one would whistle to them and pat them, but as machines with which one can have no communion or sympathy."

It would be painful to quote from the diary of Russell, sure to be a faithful reporter, the language of contempt in which British masters can sometimes speak of the natives, and the instances of insolent oppression which Russell witnessed. The social gulf has probably been somewhat widened by the shortening of the voyage between India and England. In former days, the Anglo-Indian, never going home, became more identified with the people of the country in which the better part of his life was spent.

The ostensible rigidity of caste may have been slightly softened by unavoidable increase of contact in railway carriages and elsewhere; otherwise, caste seems to have remained unshaken, so much so that one eminent reformer proposes to recognize it as the permanent mould of Hindoo society. Such a decision would be tantamount to recognition of the impossibility of a social assimilation of India to England. Into the dark seclusion of the Zenana English ladies are striving to carry light.

We have varying accounts, as might be expected, of the fruits of missionary effort. The number of converts to Christianity is proportionately small, being under three millions in a population of two hundred and ninety-four millions. Anglo-Indians are apt to speak of them with little respect. They appear to be generally of the humblest class; but they may not on that account be the worse Christians. The missionaries cannot fail to be weakened by their own divisions. To convert a Mussulman, with his intense and militant belief in the unity of God, to the Trinitarian doctrine may well be a desperate undertaking. A combination of Christianity and Buddhism has, however, produced schools, more than one, of Theosophy with Christian ethics. This is a development interesting not to Hindostan alone.

In a strange land and among a subject people, "Tommy Atkins" is inevitably exposed to great temptations, and it is not likely that the preaching of the missionary pulpit is always illustrated by his example. This seems to be an evil inherent in the moral circumstances of an army of occupation, and one against which no care on the part of Government or commander can entirely guard.

There is at present a good deal of political fermentation in India. It has broken out on the question of dividing the administrative province of Bengal, and finds expression in the Indian press. It evokes sympathy and has allies in England, where Hindoos are now entering the political arena as candidates for seats in the British Parliament. But it appears to be confined to the educated Hindoos, who, having passed their examinations and qualified for high employment, find no career open to their natural ambition. It does not seem that anything like a national movement of liberation exists, or is yet possible. England, it is true, has by her rule restored the territorial unity of the Mogul Empire. She has also given the upper classes generally a common

language. But among the people generally there are still a number of distinct languages, nor is the religious antagonism between Hindoo and Mahometan extinct, though it has been softened by a common subjection to the Empire. On the part of the masses, therefore, it would seem that nothing beyond dull antipathy to a foreign master is yet to be feared, while the native princes still owe to the Empire the security of their thrones.

If there is danger in any quarter, it probably is in that of the Mussulman, who, dispossessed by the British conqueror, has not forgotten that he once was lord. The Indian Mussulman, moreover, is a member of Islam, and looks up, it is said, with a lively loyalty to the Commander of the Faithful at Constantinople. War between England and Islam would, therefore, be likely to kindle a fire in Hindostan. England, a Christian power, has more Mohammedan subjects than any power in the world.

To attempt to strike the balance between the advantages and disadvantages of British rule in India would be to enter into a boundless controversy. Foreign rule in itself must always be an evil. India was rescued by Great Britain from murderous and devastating anarchy; though at the time she was plundered by official corruption of a good deal of the wealth which, being poor though gorgeous, she could ill afford to lose. She has since enjoyed general peace and order; both, we may be sure, to a far greater extent than she otherwise would have done. The deadly enmity between her races and religions has been controlled and assuaged. The foreign establishments, civil and military, though highly paid, have been small for the population, and the civil administration has been, in recent times, what Oriental administrations never are, perfectly incorrupt. The army, unlike the rabble armies of native princes, has been kept under strict discipline. Evil customs have been suppressed; trade and manufactures have been fostered; education, science, hygiene have been introduced, imperfectly it may be, but still introduced, which otherwise they would hardly have been. What national development, in itself always preferable, would in this case have done we can hardly tell. It might have been, and probably would have been, better for India to be ruled by a line of Akbars. But of Akbars, unhappily, there never is a line. In the next reign degeneracy began.

It does not appear that there is any considerable migration

from the provinces directly under British dominion to those which are under native rule. The people, no doubt, are generally fixed to their habitations by poverty and difficulty of movement; still, if they greatly preferred the native rule, a certain amount of migration to it there would probably be.

That the masses of India in general are miserably poor cannot be denied. The question is, whether under the Mogul Emperors they were better off. Was taxation lighter? Was India, under her former rulers, more free than she is now from pestilence and famine? Mahratta and Pindaree ravages must surely have carried famine in their train. Deserted cities seem to attest the prevalence of plague in former days. The population has vastly increased, and its increase may in some measure account for dearth.

With regard to fiscal and commercial questions, it may safely be said that, at all events in late years, there has been no disposition on England's part to do anything but justice to India.

India's complaints, speaking generally, seem to be of things inseparable from foreign rule, the withdrawal of which would be the only remedy. But suppose British rule withdrawn from India, what would follow? Is there anything ready to take its place? Would not the result be anarchy, such as prevailed when England came on the scene, or a struggle for ascendancy between the Mahometan and the Hindoo, with another battle of Paniput? Suppose the Mahometan, stronger in spirit though weaker in numbers, to prevail, would his ascendancy be more beneficial and less galling to the Hindoo than is that of the English Sahib?

One of the shrewdest of economists, Nassau Senior, rebuked those who said that the greatness of England depended on her possession of India. "On the contrary," he said, "he wished England were well rid of India, if only a good way of riddance could be found." The Indian service has been a fine field for English youth. This, perhaps, has been England's surest gain. How far British industry and commerce have gained by the political connection, it is for commercial experts to say. To the account of loss must be set down the expensive necessity of guarding the way from the Imperial country to the great dependency. To the account of moral loss must be set down the defence of the accursed Turkish Empire and the opium monopoly with its Chinese wars.

Danger of Russian invasion there never was, though alarm about it caused two Afghan wars, with their drains upon the store of the Hindoo. Once an entire British army was lost, while the despatches of the Envoy who was alleged to have countenanced the expedition had, when the Government was called to account, to be laid before Parliament in a garbled form. The military party cherished a belief favorable to military policy and adventure; by the civilians it was generally discredited. A Mogul or Tartar raider might swoop from those mountain passes with his horde upon the enervated people of the plains. Widely different would be the march of a great modern army, with its artillery and its train, to meet on its descent another regular army equal or superior in force to itself. Russia might threaten when she was thwarted elsewhere; there might be talk at Russian army messes; but the best authorities did not share the alarm.

British Empire in India is in no danger of being brought to an end by a Russian invasion. It does not seem to be in much danger of being brought to an end by internal rebellion. Yet it must end. Such is the decree of nature. In that climate British children cannot be reared. No race can forever hold and rule a land in which it cannot rear its children. In what form the end would come it has hitherto been impossible to divine. "By accident" was the only reply which one who had held high office in India could make to such a question on that subject. Since this reawakening of the East, a more definite source of possible disturbance may be said to loom. In encouraging Japan to go to war, Lord Lansdowne may have done something which was far from his intention, and of which he did not dream. He may have inadvertently pressed the button of fate.

GOLDWIN SMITH.